

# CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

May 1992

No 178

SANDON IN MARCH 1992



WALKING IN ECHUCA-Mann  
(see p. 2!)

Birds seen drinking at the bird bath were

Grey Fantail  
Crimson Rosellas  
Scarlet Robin (pair)  
Yellow Robin  
Rufous Whistler (pair)  
Grey Shrike-thrush (pair)  
Wrens  
Speckled Warblers (group of 5)  
Striated Thornbills  
Buff-rumped Thornbills  
Brown Thornbills

White-throated Treecreeper  
Red Wattlebird (pair)  
Brown-headed Honeyeaters  
Fuscous Honeyeaters  
White-eared Honeyeaters (pair)  
Striated Pardalotes  
Spotted Pardalotes  
Silvereyes (pair)  
Magpies  
Grey Currawong

Birds seen on the property

An Owlet Nightjar took up residence in a bird box for about 10 days. The box is now occupied by two sugar gliders. A common brushtail possum is in a box nearby.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill (pair)  
Brown Falcon  
Common Bronzewing (pair)  
Eastern Rosellas  
Galahs  
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo  
Fan-tailed Cuckoo  
Kookaburra  
Welcome Swallow (pair)  
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike  
Hooded Robin (pair)

Crested Shrike-tit  
Golden Whistler (immature)  
Willie Wagtail  
Yellow-rumped Thornbill  
Yellow Thornbill  
Southern Whiteface  
Varied Sittellas  
Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters  
Diamond Firetail  
White-winged Choughs  
Australian Raven

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Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc. P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine 3450.

## CHIRPING IN ECHUCA

Every month the CHIRP walking group takes a bus trip to a spot that will offer a change of scenery for walking, and a good picnic spot. We've been to places such as the Koala Park, Hepburn Springs and the Whipstick. This month it was to Echuca-Moama.

The morning walk was an hour along the river on the scenic road through the caravan park, and back. Lunch for some was early, down by the river, because of the lure of the Moama Bowling Club! Two of the more sober-minded, Mary Willis and myself, decided to continue our wanderings, walking down to the park behind the civic centre for lunch. It's a good spot for birds, and as usual, there were lots of Long-billed Corellas, Cockatoos, Galahs, Eastern Rosellas, Moorhens, Black Duck and Wood Duck, with a few Yellow Rosellas, Mudlarks and Noisy Miners for good measure.

We were to meet the others at 3.30 at the club, and after a walk back to the Port area, we headed over the bridge and crossed over near the caravan park to where we had been told a footbridge crossed Horseshoe Lagoon. What an enjoyable walk that proved to be. We followed one of the tracks, prepared to go back if we couldn't see the way out and back to the town, but met one of the locals who told us we just needed to continue on until we came to street where we could return to the township along a street with some very attractive gardens. We arrived at the club just as 2 or 3 of the others were having a much needed cuppa - we were told that it was very hot "in there" and they were feeling a bit "broke". We felt great, and hadn't lost a cent, much less dollars!

We'd all had a great time tho', and were pretty tired when we got home, but we had a list of 37 birds for the area. The bird list was

Greater Egret	Galah	Grey Fantail
White-faced Heron	White Cockatoo	Blackbird
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Long-billed Corella	Superb Blue Wren
Straw-necked Ibis	Eastern Rosella	Buff-rumped Thornbill
Little Pied Cormorant	Yellow Rosella	Brown Treecreeper
Black Duck	Red-rumped Parrot	Noisy Miner
Wood Duck	Feral Pigeon	Blue-faced Honeyeater
Dusky Moorhen	Kookaburra	White-plumed Honeyeater
Black-shouldered Kite	Welcome Swallow	Red-browed Finch
Nankeen Kestrel	Willy Wagtail	Sparrow
Starling	Pied Butcher Bird	Black-backed Magpie
Masked Woodswallow	Pied Currawong	Australian Raven
Mudlark		

(By the way, the CHIRP walking group is open to anyone who would like to come along. Wednesday, leave at 10 am sharp. Walk for an hour, morning tea to follow. Cost 50c.)

Rita Mills

## **OBSERVATIONS**

**GANG GANGS AT BELMONT.** 21 Gang Gangs were seen in a Lemon-scented Gum in Belmont. Gang gangs visit on most days, but not this many. (KT)

**ALBINO GREY FANTAIL AT BELMONT.** A pure albino Grey Fantail was observed for several minutes in the Botanic gardens, by three rather experienced bird watchers. Two ordinary Grey Fantails were nearby. (KT)

**THOUSANDS OF SPARROWS.** Flocks of Sparrows numbering in the thousands have been reported from Chewton. (ER)

**LITTLE WATTLE BIRD** has been reported from Maldon. It was identified by its call, and its silhouette. It was apparently following the flowering Grey Box, and moving along the Maldon-Lockwood Road. (GS)

**ABUNDANCE OF MOTHS.** Moths have been common, at about the same time as last year. They appear to be laying eggs on the window. (BW). The moths were thought to be Cup Moths.

**CRANBERRY HEATH ARE IN FLOWER,** as the result of recent rains. There are masses of flowers this year. (RM)

**BROWN HEADED HONEYEATER** has been sitting on the back of a kangaroo. It hangs on, plucking out hair. (BP)

**SPOTTED PARDALOTE SITTING OUTSIDE WINDOW** for lengthy periods. Thought to be seeing his reflection. (DG)

**UNUSUAL YABBIE.** A black yabbie with white spines along the back has been seen at Guildford (BP)

**MISTLETOE BIRDS.** A pair has been seen in the garden at Campbell St each day for some time. (KT)

**BROWN AND WHITE-THROATED TREECREEPERS** have been seen together, sometimes closer than a metre at Fryerstown. (CN)

## **TWINS**

I've been told about a "Brushie" possum who has her second set of twins in two years. The owner of the workshop where they live - five of them now - told me how he'd seen the little one staggering along the rafters and thought "Oh, junior is out", but a short time later saw Mum with a little one on her back, and the other trailing along behind.

It is usual for ringtail possums (which we have around) to have twins, but unusual for brushtails. R.M.



## QUESTION CORNER

Q. What is the name of this orchid, found in the Chewton area?

A. Parson's Bands, or *Eriochilus cuculatus*).

This is one of the common autumn orchids. The name is given from the resemblance to the white neck-bands once worn by parsons. In the orchid, these bands range from pink to white. In suitable seasons, Parsons Bands are abundant.

The scientific name comes from

erio + chilus = woolly + bird's bill, meaning that the labellum disc is woolly with fine short hairs.  
cuculatus means hooded.



## CAMPOUT AT GLENLUCE 1969

On 8-10th March, 1969, members of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club held a campout on the banks of the Loddon River at Glenluce. A major activity during the camp was the search for gemstones along the Loddon River. Minerals found included several dozen sapphires, ruby-red zircons, jet-black spinels, magnetite, ilmenite, and iron pyrites. The colour of the sapphires ranged from semi-opaque pale blue to a clear rich cornflower blue.

In the article describing the camp in "The Bendigo Naturalist" of May 1969, Jack Kellam wrote

"In the mornings we found time to stroll down the river among the river gums and yellow box trees to check on the bird life of the area. Red-browed finches were common among the Blackberries and tea-tree near the water, as also were the Eastern Spinebills seen sipping nectar from the nearly finished flowers of the Pale Bottlebrush (*Callistemon paludosa*). The Yellow-faced Honeyeater was observed feeding well-grown young out of the nest, and in a small Red Box sapling a nest with 2 young of the White-naped Honeyeater was found. The parent birds carried out an incessant shuttle service with food for the young, from daylight to almost dark. They were not deterred by the proximity of our party and good views were had by all. The nest was about 10 feet above the ground. Spotted Pardalotes were feeding unconcernedly in the leaves of the Long-leaf Box and their plaintive calls, (reminding you of a squeaking swing) were often heard. In the taller trees, Crimson Rosellas, most of them in their immature plumage were often seen and heard. A Scarlet Robin and his not so brilliant mate were seen on several occasions near the camp. Other birds seen in the area included - White-throated Treecreeper, Rufous Whistler, Yellow Robin, White-plumed Honeyeater, Eastern Striated Pardalote, White-browed Scrub Wren, Kookaburra, Grey Thrush, White-backed Magpie, Raven etc."

It seems likely that the camping spot used in 1969 is one of our favou-

rite bird watching areas. It is remarkable that three of the birds that are most common now, were not mentioned in the 1969 article. These are the Fuscous and the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, and the Blue Wren. Over the past few years, I have seen each of these species on each visit, and usually many of each of them. In 1969, Eastern Spinebills were recorded as being common - I have not seen any of these during my visits to Glenluce.

## THE 1991 BIRD LISTS

Over the past few years, the bird lists made during the year have been collated. The birds seen during an outing have been listed, and the figures given below refer to the number of lists on which each bird appeared. Some lists are for all day excursions with a number of observers. Other lists are for short-term outings with a small number of records. Some outings were to water habitats, and so water birds are well represented. For 1991, results for 52 outings were collated. As in other years, there will be a bias towards easily identified birds. Some, like Ravens and Grebe, will be under represented because it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between species.

The three most commonly recorded birds were Magpies, Wrens and Galahs.

Figures in brackets are percentages.

Birds which were on at least half of the lists were Magpie (96), Blue Wren (78), Galah (69), Willy Wagtail (62), Red Wattle Bird (60), Mudlark (58), Masked Lapwing (54), Sparrow (52), Little Pied Cormorant (52), Australian Raven (52), White-faced Heron (50) and Maned Duck (50).

**Water birds.** Some interesting comparisons are

Little Pied Cormorant (52), Little Black Cormorant (14), Great Cormorant (10), Pied Cormorant (2) and Darter (10).

Little Grebe (33), Hoary-headed Grebe (10) and Great-crested Grebe (6). Sacred Ibis (32), Straw-necked Ibis (6).

Coot (39), Dusky Moorhen (33), Swamphen (16), Black-tail Native Hen (4) Yellow Spoonbill (20), Royal Spoonbill (2).

White-faced Heron (50), Pacific Heron (25), Great Egret (4).

Masked Lapwing (54), Black-fronted Plover (18) and Banded Lapwing (4).

**Ducks and Swans.** Maned Duck (50) was the most frequently recorded, followed by Black Duck (44), Swan (27), Shelduck (23), Grey Teal (21), Musk Duck (19), Hardhead (12), Chestnut Teal and Shoveller (4), and Pink-eared and Mallard (2).

**Hawks.** Brown Falcon was the most common (27). Others were Australian Kestrel (16), Whistling Kite Black-shouldered Kite (10), Little Eagle and Wedge-tailed Eagle (8), Marsh harrier (6) and Peregrine Falcon (2).

**Pigeons.** The order was Crested Pigeon (18), Common Bronzewing (16), Feral Pigeon (6) and Peaceful Dove and Brush Bronzewing (2).

**Parrots and Cockatoos.** Galahs (78) were by far the most common. Others which made at least 10% of the lists were Eastern Rosella (56), Crimson Rosella (46), Red-rumped Parrot (38), Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (35) and Long-billed Corella (27).

**Cuckoos** were seldom recorded. The only records were Pallid Cuckoo (6), and Fan-tailed and Horsefield Cuckoo (4).

**Owls.** The only observation was of a Boobook (2).

**Kookaburras and Kingfishers.** Kookaburra (48) and Sacred Kingfisher (10) were the only records. Rainbow Birds (6) were also seen.

**Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** was on 23% of the lists.

**Swallows and Martins** Swallows were only recorded on 48% of the outings. Fairy Martins (16) were more often seen than Tree Martins (4).

**Robins and Whistlers..** Scarlet Robins (29) were followed by Yellow Robins (27) and Jacky Winters (25). Then came Rufous Whistlers and Flame Robins (18), Golden Whistlers (14) and Eastern Shrike-tits (8).

**Flycatchers.** The order was Willy Wagtail (62), Grey Fantail (25) and Restless Flycatcher (23).

**Wrens** Superb Fairy-wren is surprisingly often recorded, and was on 74% of lists. The White-browed Scrub-wren was on 14% of lists.

**Thornbills.** The conspicuous Yellow-tailed Thornbill (46) was most often listed. Next came Brown Thornbills (27), Buff-tailed Thornbills (25), Weebills (21), Striated Thornbills (14) and Yellow Thornbills (10).

**Treecreepers.** The order was White-throated Treecreeper (27), Brown Treecreeper (19) and Sittella (8).

**Honeyeaters.** Red Wattlebird (60) led. Others were White-plumed Honeyeater (38), Yellow-tufted (33), Fuscous (29), White-eared (25), Yellow-faced (21), White-naped and Brown-headed (12), Eastern Spinebill (10), and New Holland (8). Noisy Miner was on 21% of the lists.

**Pardalotes.** Spotted Pardalote (26) was more often seen than Striated Pardalote (14).

**Introduced Birds** These were Starlings (54), Blackbirds (29), Sparrows (27), Goldfinch (19) and Indian Mynahs (6).



Finches were Red-browed Firetail (33) and Diamond Firetail (6).

Woodswallows. the only observations were for Dusky Woodswallows (16).

Magpies and Ravens etc.. As usual, Magpies were by far the most often recorded, with 98% Others were Mudlarks (58), Australian Ravens (55), White-winged Choughs (38), Grey Currawongs (16), Little Ravens (21) and Pied Currawongs (2).

The full list can be obtained from E. Perkins.

Club members are invited to contribute to the 1992 list. Make a list of all birds seen for an excursion. The list should be for a single day or part of a day. The list may be for the whole of the excursion or a selected area on the excursion.

## **ASTRONOMY NOTES**

Eta aquarids. This meteor shower is at its peak on May 4th.

Pluto is opposite the Sun on May 12 and so at its closest approach to Earth. However, it is so faint that you will need a 20 cm diameter telescope in order to see it.

Spica is the brightest star near the moon on May 14th. Spica is the brightest star in Virgo.

## **SEWERAGE PONDS BIRD LIST 19/4/92**

Hoary-headed Grebe	Dusky Moorhen	New Holland Honeyeater
Little Grebe	Coot	Spotted Pardalote
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Black-fronted Dotterel	Silvereye
Great Cormorant	Masked Lapwing	Red-browed Firetail
Black Swan	Welcome Swallow	Goldfinch
Black Duck	Superb Fairy Wren	House Sparrow
Grey Teal	Little Grassbird	Starling
Chestnut Teal	Flame Robin	Magpie Lark
Sulphur-crest. Cockatoo	Willie Wagtail	Magpie
Galah	Restless Flycatcher	Australian Raven
Collared Sparrowhawk	Grey Fantail	Little Raven
Purple Swamphen	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	

Time was 8.00 to 9.00 am. Sunny with a light wind.

P West.

## **FRIENDS OF CASTLEMAINE BOTANIC GARDENS**

A Friends Group is being formed. Further information from Kevin Walsh or one of the CFNC committee. Castlemaine is indeed fortunate in having such a beautiful garden, and it would be good to have, as well, a strong and active Friends Group.

## **CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM**

**Fri 8 May. CHILE.** Talk by Helen Conn. High School at 8 pm.

**Sat 9 May. MT ALEXANDER KOALA PARK** A walk through the new koala park. Meet at 1.30 pm at SEC, Mostyn St, or 1.45 pm at Koala Park entrance. Leader is R Mills. Take your binoculars.

**Thurs 21 May. THURSDAY EXCURSION.** Joint CFNC/U3A birdwatching excursion. Meet Cont Ed. car park, Templeton St at 9.00 am. Leader E Perkins.

**Thurs 28 May. BUSINESS MEETING** 7.30 pm at 38 Campbell Street.

**Fri 12 June. DESERT WANDERINGS AND DESERT PLANTS** Talk by John Lindner. High School at 8.00 pm.

**Sat 13 June. BULLARTO RESERVOIR.** Fungi and birds. Meet SEC, Mostyn St at 1.30 pm. or Guildford P.O. at 1.40 pm. Leader is E. Perkins.

**Thurs 18 June. THURSDAY EXCURSION.** CFNC/U3A birdwatching excursion. Meet Cont. Ed. car park, Templeton St at 9.00 am. Leader G Broadway.

**Fri 10 July. LAMINGTON NATIONAL PARK.** Video.

**Sat 11 July. DUNOLLY and INGLEWOOD.** Dunolly nature trail and Inglewood botanic gardens. Meet 27 Doveton St at 9.30. or Maldon PO at 9.45.

**Fri 14 Aug. WILDFLOWERS AND BIRDS OF CENTRAL AUSTRALIA** with Chris Morris

**22-23 Aug KOOLAMURT CAMPOUT** A WVFNC campout on the outskirts of Bendigo, organised by Bendigo FNC. Bunk style accommodation. Self cater. Mattresses supplied. Cost \$6 per head per night. Sunday barbecue - cost \$5.

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**MEETINGS:** Second Friday of each month (Jan excepted) at Castlemaine High School at 8.00 p.m. Business meetings on the fourth Thursday (Dec excepted) at 38 Campbell St at 7.30 p.m. All members are invited to attend. Visitors are invited to attend the Club's sessions.

### **SUBSCRIPTIONS 1992**

Single \$12; Family \$18; Student/pensioner \$8; Supporting member \$20  
Newsletter posted: subscription plus \$6

**SUPPER:** May: P & G Broadway. June: E Duffin & M Oliver

**COMMITTEE:** Barbara Maund (pres), George Broadway (vp), Brenda Envall (vp), Maggie Oliver (sec), Chris Norwood (treas), Shirley Parnaby, Rita Mills (Newsletter & Pub officer), Kaye Turner (progams), Beris Perry, Chris Morris, Clodagh Norwood and Ern Perkins(asst newsletter).